(b) if so, whether any decision has been taken in this regard;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) to what extent it would be helpful?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) No, Sir. The service licence fee and spectrum charges for cellular services, Basic services including WLL (Wireless in Local Loop) and VSAT (Very Small Aperture Terminal) are currently on revenue share.

(b) to (d) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

IT for rural areas

3585. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA :

DR. AKHILESH DAS :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether any plan has been worked out to extend benefits of the information technology to the rural areas of the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken so far in pursuance thereof; and

(c) the progress, so far, made in promoting information technology benefits in the rural areas of Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and the Central aid given therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI SU. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Department of Information Technology (DIT) through National Informatics Centre (NIC) provides NICNET backbone and e-governance support to both Central and State Governments and UT administrations. The Land Records Computerisation has been implemented in 2400 taluks in the country. NIC also provides necessary hardware at districts, application software in local languages and training to revenue officials, Government to Citizens (G2C) application packages in various States relating to Government Schemes, Government forms, grievances, etc., have also been developed in various

States. ICT support has been provided to Ministry of Rural Development in Centre and States and to DRDAs; and software solutions have been developed such as Rural Soft 2000, RuralBazar, PriaSoft, eNRICH, etc. The Central Government has implemented the schemes, such as AGMARKNET in all States/UTs and Community Information Centres in all 487 Blocks of North-Eastern States including Sikkim to harness the power of IT towards socioeconomic changes for rural and tribal masses.

As a part of e-Governance, DIT has initiated to roll out and horizontal transfer of land record project, namely Bhoomi, implemented successfully in the State of Karnataka to other States in the country. In the recent initiative, the Department has taken further action towards developing IT application for the rural and poor people, through Media Lab Asia for reaching the benefits of ICT technologies. This scheme is to address the grand challenges of poverty, literacy, education, health, employment, and micro-entrepreneurship.

The DIT had also established Four (4) Samadhan Kendras under a pilot scheme for the benefit of rural masses. Under the Ministry of Agriculture, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has linked its Research Institutes, State Agricultural Universities, Zonal Research Stations and selected Krishi Vigyan Kendras for E-mail, internet and dissemination of research information. The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation has operationalised two Schemes namely, National Agriculture Informatics Centre and Early Warning Information System and also strengthened the use of IT tools in the field offices and the Directorates.

(c) The following activities for spreading the benefit of IT applications being implemented in the rural areas are given below :-

I. Madhya Pradesh (MP).

(i) 11 Point Programme Monitoring System : This provides information on monitoring and review of 11-point programme related to data at various levels of district administration, such as working of hand-pumps and transformers, functioning of schools and anganwadis, etc.

(ii) Computerization of Land Records

(iii) Gyandoot

(iv) Panchayati Raj Institutions Accounting Software (PriaSoft)

(v) RuralSoft

(vi) Geographical Information System (GSI) based Management Information System (MIS) for Rural Roads.

(vii) DIT had also set up Samadhan Kendras at Ujjain and Chitrakoot in M.R

II. Andhra Pradesh (AP): Customized RuralSoft 2000 Software, Rural Soft Financial Accounting Software, Informatics Website for Women Empowerment and Self Employment, EKPANCH Project towards computerizing all the activities of Gram Panchayat which include old age pension disbursement, Issue of Birth and Death Certificates, House Tax collection, Financial accounting, etc., is under implementation at Ramachandrapuram. Software tool for analyzing self help Groups, Below Poverty Line (BPL) Survey Group data entry software, a Web Application developed for monitoring habitation wise details of Borewells and People Welfare Schemes. DIT had also set up one Samadhan Kendra at Tadepalligudem, West Godavari District.

Under the IT/Computerization Schemes of Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) both the States of M.R and A.P. have been provided a central assistance of Rs. 3703.11 lakhs and Rs. 2567.97 lakhs respectively upto 31st March, 2003.

Cut in STD rate by BSNL

3586. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has announced major cut in STD rates;

(b) if so, to what extent and the date from which these rates became effective;

(c) whether the BSNL proposes to reduce the iSD rate also; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?